

Sub 81



25 May 2010

The Research Director  
Economic Development Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Sir/ Madam

**Inquiry into developing Queensland's rural and regional communities through grey nomad tourism**

It has been noted that over the past years there has been an increased interest in interpreting and understanding a broad range of trends associated with what is usually known as the 'grey nomad' cohort. While it is noted that some definitions provide a degree of clarity in respect to grey nomads and 'grey tourist' niche categories, it is equally important to note that there is scope for further redefining of those categories in light of other factors. One such example is the defined aged group normally associated with the above categories. At present there is a broad agreement to consider that grey nomads are people aged 55 years and older. However that category could be expanded to include people aged 50 years and older to match the existing approach from some agencies such as National Seniors Australia.

The overall importance of tourism to Queensland's economy should indeed be viewed in part through the way grey nomads are engaged in an active niche market. The nature of that engagement can be diverse and, from Volunteering Queensland's perspective, volunteering offers a very efficient, mutually rewarding and above all sustainable path leading to increased benefits to both social and economic wellbeing.

It may be vital to acknowledge that while volunteering trends in Queensland have changed over the years and continue to be shaped by a wide range of factors, it remains a fact that people in the grey nomad age group are an attractive volunteer marketplace for many nonprofit organisations across the State. It is also vital to note that, due to the nature of grey nomads' lifestyles, it is critical that local communities willing to benefit from engaging grey nomads as volunteers need to be supported in their efforts to ensure the proper infrastructure necessary for volunteering engagement exists. This includes ensuring quality

processes in terms of recruitment and support of potential volunteers in accordance with national standards and the existing regulatory framework (such as insurance, WH&S, etc).

It is advisable that strategies to improve engagement with grey nomads incorporate existing infrastructure for specialist support to community nonprofit organisations and volunteers. Equally vital is consideration of the diversity of the local communities in Queensland in respect to local needs and capacities to offer meaningful voluntary work to grey nomads who desire to part take in activities on local level. The notions of grey nomads, volunteering and tourism have been observed for a long time as a new trend and a way of perceiving volunteering as a rewarding experience. This is also one aspect that attracts opportunity for international visitors who in fact could be viewed as 'global grey nomads' willing to visit Australia and Queensland with an aim of experiencing local culture and contributing to local communities.

Grey nomad volunteering can be perceived as a pathway into more engagement in rural communities with associated benefits - ensuring that the initial volunteering experience is a taster for future involvement. Some anecdotal evidence indicates that this kind of approach offers people opportunities to create a set of new social connections that are based on 'real life' engagement. It has been noted that some projects and programs operated by Indigenous Community Volunteering effectively incorporate that knowledge into marketing campaigns designed for such engagement.

Further consideration in respect to grey nomads and volunteering may need to reflect on emerging programs that in the long term can be very effective in adding value to Queensland tourism. From Volunteering Queensland's perspective, it is worth noting that we are in the process of developing a portal called [TourismVolunteering.com.au](http://TourismVolunteering.com.au), which will be operated as a sister site for Volunteering Qld's main website. The tourism portal is a joint partnership with Queensland Government and Volunteering Queensland and is designed to provide specialist support to Queensland tourism organisations which are capable of involving volunteers in local events. The site will be operational from July 2010 and has already attracted many tourism operators/visitors centres. An overall benefit for tourism is the aggregate capacity for, on one hand, agencies to seek and promote volunteering as a great tourist experience and, on the other hand, for many people including grey nomads to find relevant voluntary work in regional places across Queensland.

Additionally, it may be valuable for the committee to consider other recent and emerging discussions on the subject such as:

- Radio ABC discussion with A/Prof Melanie Oppenheimer (Viva Activa 6: Will the baby boomers save volunteering)
- Discussion on: Potential for volunteering in outback towns, by Jenny Onyx and Rosemary Leonard

- Research results conducted by BeNext specialist recruitment company focusing on baby boomers retiring and willing to accept 'fusion careers' that allow for mixture of travel, volunteering and work. (<http://www.benext.com.au/-165200/Future%20of%20work%20survey/>)

In conclusion, the potential for more effective engagement of grey nomads can be achieved through volunteering as a well established paradigm. An incorporated strategy that brings together existing infrastructure, along with further dedicated development, could produce benefits that are both socially and economically sustainable. It is critical, however, given the responsibility of organizations oversighting volunteers to have the systems in place and governance practices to ensure grey nomad volunteers can be used in a productive, mutually safe and responsible way that benefits all concerned.

Volunteering Queensland, as the peak body in the voluntary sector in Queensland, is a willing potential partner in the future growth of Queensland's social and economic prosperity.

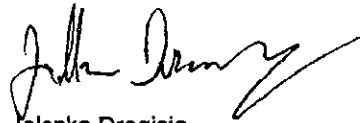
We hope that this brief submission provides valuable information to the Economic Development Committee's work.

We would be pleased to provide a verbal briefing on the issues we have identified in this submission.

Yours faithfully,



Richard Williams  
Chair



Jelenko Dragisic  
Chief Executive Officer